

Analysis Summary

Garrett Park 2009 Parks Survey

I. Introduction

The Garrett Park Parks and Open Space Committee conducted a survey during the summer of 2009 seeking information about how residents regard the current state and use of the Town's parks. The survey focused on four park areas: Cambria Park, Garrett-Waverly Park, the Town Tennis Courts near the pool, and Wells Park. The committee chose to focus on these areas and excluded Porcupine woods because the survey objective was to provide direction for future focus of committee efforts to make major improvements to parks. The committee consensus is that Porcupine Woods is not in need of major improvements at this time.

The survey design was simple, asking residents to rate each of the four parks in two multiple choice categories, safety/security and general condition; then providing space to comment on each individual park. In addition, the survey asked residents to list favorite parks in Montgomery County. The survey could be completed on paper or electronically through the SurveyGizmo website. The Town mailed the survey to residents and it was later advertised on a Town listserve.

II. Summary of the Multiple Choice Question Results

Results are summarized for each of the four parks listed in alphabetical order. The full results are attached here as provided by the SurveyGizmo website.

Cambria Park: A total of 127 residents responded. For safety and security, 68.8% said it is adequate, 16 % said it needs improvement, and 15.2% said don't know. For general condition, 63.5% said it is adequate, 25.4% said it needs improvement, and 11.1% said don't know.

Garrett-Waverly Park (near Penn Place; owned partly by the Town and partly by the County): A total of 129 residents responded. For safety and security, 70.6% said it is adequate, 17.5% said it needs improvement, and 11.9% said don't know. For general condition, 58.6% said it is adequate, 31.3% said it needs improvement, and 10.2% said don't know.

Town Tennis Courts (near pool): A total of 133 residents responded. For safety and security, 48.1% said it is adequate, 32.6% said it needs improvement, and 19.4% said don't know. For general condition, 24.8% said it is adequate, 65.1% said it needs improvement, and 10.1% said don't know.

Wells Park (owned by Montgomery County): A total of 122 residents responded. For safety and security, 49.6% said it is adequate, 26.9% said it needs improvement, and

23.5% said don't know. For general condition, 44.2% said it is adequate, 38.3% said it needs improvement, and 17.5% said don't know.

III. Analysis of Individual Park Comments

Each park received a considerable number of individual comments from residents who responded to the survey. Comment categories with 5 or more tallied commenters are summarized briefly below. For details, please see the attached detailed summary of all comments. Parks are listed in alphabetical order.

Cambria Park

Cambria Park is adjacent on the West side of the pool. 66 comments were received on Cambria. 18 commenters suggested replacing the equipment. 14 commenters said the park is nice, good, and well utilized. A number of comments complimented recent work and plantings in the area. A variety of improvements were suggested with 1-3 comments each.

Committee Discussion/Recommendations: The group also discussed the ongoing investigations for possible future replacement or addition of upgraded playground equipment at Cambria. Two committee members have done considerable research and have some very nice proposals with pricing ready that can be displayed to get community feedback (as was discussed at the September committee meeting). The group agreed to seek opinions about these options at the same time we solicit information about the Town Tennis Courts as a potential competing priority for Town and Program Open Space (POS) funds—in order to get resident feedback about priority use of funds.

Garrett-Waverly Park (M-NCPPC) near Penn Place

A total of 70 comments received about this park. 21 comments were general and positive about the park overall, especially the landscaping provided and maintained by the Town. 8 comments were general and negative about the park. 21 commenters suggested fixing up the basketball court. 14 commenters asked for Tennis court repairs. 19 total comments suggested additional amenities (such as more picnic tables, safety/ADA access, lighting, grill, gazebo, shuffleboard, etc.), no single suggestion received more than 2 votes each.

Committee Discussion/Recommendations:

Mayor Keller said the Town is currently in negotiations with County Parks Department over the maintenance of this area. He would like to know if a ½ court basketball court would meet the typical basketball users' needs due to the safety issues presented by the immediately adjacent retaining wall on the County side of the court. The group agreed to solicit opinions about the basketball court size from users—perhaps through the Bugle and the list serve. The Town will provide the request for repairs to the County-owned tennis courts to the County. It was not clearly discussed, but it is possible that the basketball court upgrade may be a competitor for priority use of Town and POS funds since much of the court is on the Town portion of this park.

Town Tennis Courts near the Pool

A total 104 comments were made about the Town Tennis Court area. 23 commenters suggested it be turned into a dog park. 22 commenters suggested fixing it up for the mixed uses it currently gets (including tennis, badminton, dogs, etc.). 15 commenters asked that the tennis courts be fixed up. 11 commenters specifically asked for changing to other uses. 8 commenters suggested fixing up with no specific use indicated. 8 commenters called the park an eyesore. 6 commenters suggested giving the park to the pool association.

Committee Discussion/Recommendations: The group agreed that more information is needed about what it would cost to fix the subsidence problem that has perennially undermined the tennis court surface. The group discussed it would be useful to frame community discussion about this area as part of the larger Cambria playground/Pool complex. The group agreed to ask the Town Administrator to seek some no-cost bids for fixing the subsidence problem at the site. The group agreed the Committee should also ask the Town to pay for an engineering assessment of the problem if necessary in order to have more complete information to make any decisions about feasible options for improving this park. The ultimate goal being to come up with options to present to residents similar to the Cambria playground upgrade options as a potential competing priority for Town and Program Open Space (POS) funds—in order to get resident feedback about priority use of funds.

Wells Park (M-NCPPC)

Wells Park is owned and operated by the Montgomery County Department of Parks. Out of 66 total comments received about Wells Park, approximately 21 commenters suggested a need for a playground equipment update at Wells—8 of these asked for equipment for older children. 8 commenters expressed concern about overgrown vegetation. 8 commenters have drainage concerns. 5 commenters asked for more mulch under the play equipment.

Committee Discussion/Recommendations: The group agreed to suggest that the Mayor send the write up to the County Parks Department. Also, the committee suggests the Town could do some more clearing of undesirable vegetation while leaving the more desirable to keep the natural setting many commenters mentioned. The group discussed whether the Town could pay for upgrades to Wells Park. The group agreed that though this is possible, it is clearly a park owned by the County, who also get Program Open Space funds from the State and it makes more sense for the Town to invest in the parks it has ownership and responsibility for and ask the County to upgrade Wells Park.

IV. Summary of Comments Listing Favorite Parks Around the Area (Question 9)

The survey asked for listings of favorite parks and the favorite features of those parks in the area. Out of 91 responses, 17 commenters listed Cabin John, 11 mentioned Brookside Gardens, 8 mentioned Viers Mills park/playground at the end of Beach Drive, 8 listed Rock Creek, 6 listed Wheaton Regional, many others received between 1-4 mentions. 23 commenters mentioned their favorite features at the listed parks were the

playground equipment. 11 listed hiking/walking areas as a favorite feature. 10 listed green space, wildlife, and/or woods as favorite features. 6 listed biking trails as a favorite feature. 5 listed trains and carousels as favorite features. Many other features received between 1-4 mentions.

Committee Discussion/Recommendations:

No recommendations discussed.

V. Overall Committee Discussion/Recommendations:

The group discussed at length how to move forward with possible improvements to Town parks for which the Town has responsibility and ownership. The bottom line is that the survey does not provide a clear priority from residents as to the use of the available yet limited Project Open Space (POS) and Town funding. Though proposals for possible upgrades/additions to Cambria equipment are ready to get community feedback and several members feel strongly that the equipment there needs updating, a similar level of information is not available for either the Town Tennis Courts area or the part of Garrett Waverly owned by the Town (basketball court). The group generally agreed it would be good to get similar information about options and costs for improving these parks and presenting them along with the Cambria options to residents to ask them to indicated preferred priorities for use of POS and Town funds.

VI. Attachments

- 1. Detailed Individual Park Comment Summaries**
- 2. SurveyGizmo Results in Detail**

**Analysis of Survey Comments
Cambria Playground**

Total Number of Comments About This Park	66
Comment	
Replace equipment	18
Move asphalt path	2
Add fence	1
Do not replace equipment	1
Clean the equipment	1
Have something for older kids/all ages	2
Check erosion	1
No more taxes	1
Wasted space	1
Add lights	2
Make woods the doggie park	2
bad mosquitoes	1
Keep woods wild	1
Need more plants/extend plantings	2
Kids more important than trees, lights, and dumb court cases	1
Too many wood chips/heavy equipment in area	3
Bench too low	1
"Pathetic"	1
Turn into picnic area	3
"Don't sterilize"	1
Non-Garrett Park people use park	1
Too overgrown	2
Money should go here	1
Clean woods	2
Restore bike paths	1
Nice, good, well utilized	14
Like new sidewalk	2
Like Kay's plantings	1
Great asset & good location	1
Thank you Parks Committee	1
My son likes the wood chips and climbs on them	1

**Analysis of Survey Comments
Garrett-Waverly Park (adjacent to Penn Place)**

Total number of comments about this park (out of 129):	70
Categorization of specific comments	
<i>Note: some commenters made multiple comments, so more than 70 specific comments are counted</i>	
General and positive about park:	21
General and negative about park:	8
Specific safety grate:	1
Specific safety lighting:	2
Specific safety ADA access:	2
Specific safety crosswalk:	1
Basketball court needs repairs:	21
Basketball court general likes/uses:	2
Basketball court gets little use:	2
Basketball court make it half court:	1
Tennis courts need repairs:	14
Tennis courts general likes/uses:	4
Desired new amenities or features total:	19
Chess table	1
Cooking device/grill	1
Gazebo	2
Hockey court	1
Ice skating area (natural)	1
Par course	1
Picnic tables	2
Play equipment	2
Raquetball court	2
Running track	1
Shuffleboard	2
Skateboarding	2
Trash can (near woods)	1

Analysis of Survey Comments
Town Tennis Court Area Park (adjacent to pool)

Total Number of Responses for this Park:	104
Comments	
Turn into a dog park	23
Fix up – keep as is	22
Fix tennis court	15
No opinion	11
Other use	11
Fix up – no preference given	8
Eyesore	8
Give to pool association	6
No dogs	3
Don't fix tennis court	3
Don't add lighting	1
Tennis only	1
Don't establish official dog park	1
Other uses (1 each):	
Bocci	1
Badminton	1
Horse shoes	1
Sport court	1
Add racquet ball and shuffleboard	1
Community garden	1

Analysis of Survey Comments Wells Park

Total Number of Comments for This Park:	66
Comments	
Vegetation overgrown	8
Requests for more vegetation, to “green it up”	3
Comments positive about natural aspects, nature-play opportunities	4
Calls for equipment update	21
Request for better lighting	3
Request for better site furnishings, benches, grilles, etc.	4
Drainage concerns	8
Requests for no dogs in the park	2
Need for more mulch chips under play equipment	5
Equipment for older kids	8
Miscellaneous suggestions:	
Restore stream to naturalized condition.	
Put in an exercise course for adult play.	
Several anguished pleas to restore the tire swing.	

Narrative Summary of Conditions and Comments about Wells Park (Montgomery County Park, not owned by Garrett Park).

Many helpful comments from residents yield good suggestions for the county for renewal and interesting possibilities for Wells Park. I tabulated the responses, then went down to the park to investigate complaints and suggestions.

Play equipment update got at least 20 mentions, in particular requests for equipment for older children, and more swings and climbing equipment. The beams holding mulch are indeed rotted. County would have to replace beams, or equipment, but the town maintenance gentlemen may be able go down and put more chips under the equipment at least.

Yes, it is low lying and swampy at times, as park terrain is part of the natural drainage area for Rock Creek Park, and yes, surprise, it IS near the railroad tracks. Not much to be done about that one. The possibility was raised that perhaps a restoration / naturalization of the streambed there could happen as was done across the tracks. This would be wonderful, and would enhance the opportunities for nature inspired play that several residents particularly enjoy about Wells park. When I walked the path along the drainage course, large frogs leapt into the water along the part of it that is more naturalized, out of the drainage pipe, that is. The path was clear underfoot; no downed trees blocked the path, but it is rather overgrown. Several respondents stated that downed trees are great to clamber on, and that they appreciate the opportunities for nature play and discovery.

Wells Park continued.

There are many different habitats in this park. Many communities take advantage of otherwise un-buildable sites in drainage areas prone to seasonal inundation by utilizing the land for recreational purposes. This is a good use for Wells Park area, and the dampness is simply part of the bargain. It would be ideal for the watercourse in Wells Park to be “daylighted,” (taken out of the pipe) and naturalized. To do this without pools where we would have standing water would be ideal.

There were a number of comments that the vegetation was overgrown at the margins along the streets, impeding views into and out of the park, and there were also suggestions for enhancement of plantings. Clearly the invasive honeysuckle should be removed from the perimeter, and this would improve visibility.

Survey turned up several calls for lights for night use, but this was a minor concern overall and it may be that with some peripheral vegetation clearing, more light from existing streetlights will enter the park. One comment was just one word: “hidden?” It is hard to see into the park, especially if one doesn’t look in from the main asphalt path entry at Rokeby.

One respondent said it is a “hangout for teens” after dark. How wonderful that they have a place to go.

Interestingly, the comments expressing concern about the fallen trees were balanced by those saying what a great natural play opportunity the tree trunks offered.

Overall, the overwhelming requests were for the play equipment to be updated, in particular, swings, a jungle gym or monkey bars, climbing equipment, and some items of interest for older kids. Another top priority should be replacement of rotten beams that form the periphery of the play area.

Detailed Listing of Favorite Parks in Montgomery County

Cabin John	17	19%
Brookside Gardens	11	12%
Park at End of Beach Drive	8	9%
Rock Creek	8	9%
Wheaton Regional	6	7%
Lake Needlewood	4	4%
Little Bennett Regional	4	4%
Hadley	3	3%
Nursery School park	3	3%
Holy Cross	2	2%
Cambria	2	2%
Great Falls	2	2%
Ken Gar	2	2%
Agricultural Farm	1	1%
Arillis Garden	1	1%
Billy Goat	1	1%
C&O Canal	1	1%
Candy Cane Lane	1	1%
Dog park	1	1%
Fleming Drive park	1	1%
Garrett Waverly Park	1	1%
Germantown	1	1%
King Farm	1	1%
Lake Frank	1	1%
Northwest DC parks	1	1%
Pooks Hill	1	1%
Porcupine Woods	1	1%
River Road near Poolesville	1	1%
Saint Paul park in Kensington	1	1%
Seneca Creek	1	1%
Water parks	1	1%
White Flint	1	1%
TOTAL	91	100%*

* Rounding

Note: Those who responded may have listed more than one park.

Percentages on pages 10 and 11 are based on the number of responses.

Detailed Listing of Favorite Parks in Montgomery County

Mentioned Features

Play equipment	23	20%
Hiking/walking	11	10%
Green space/wildlife/woods	10	9%
Biking	6	5%
Train/carousel	5	4%
Botanical buildings	4	4%
Clean	4	4%
Picnic tables	4	4%
Ponds/river/natural water	4	4%
Surface for kids	4	4%
Jogging	3	3%
Rock cliffs	3	3%
Tennis courts	3	3%
Basketball courts	2	2%
Safe	2	2%
Soccer	2	2%
Trash cans	2	2%
Variety of available activities	2	2%
Well maintained	2	2%
Bathrooms	1	<1%
Baseball fields	1	<1%
Basketball	1	<1%
Beaches	1	<1%
Butterfly garden	1	<1%
Camping	1	<1%
Canoeing	1	<1%
Children's activities	1	<1%
Close	1	<1%
Dog area	1	<1%
Dry after rain	1	<1%
Fenced/enclosed	1	<1%
Ice skating	1	<1%
New	1	<1%
Plantings	1	<1%
Water fountains	1	<1%
Water spray	1	<1%
TOTAL	113	100%

Note: Those who responded to this question may have listed more than one feature.

Summary of Comments by Respondents Who Asked To Be Contacted

Twelve People were contacted. One did not comment; the others said:

Use "dog run" for skateboards; have water for dogs and people; have more grass and benches

Do something about the drainage on the ball field

Fix Cambria Playground NOW! (This came from a child.)

Complaint about Waverly-Schuykill

Thank you Parks Committee. You're wonderful!

Please do something about Porcupine Woods. Clear out invasive plants; enhance native ones. Clean and line the creek by the railroad tracks.

Restore Wells and Porcupine creeks similar to, and joining with, Waverly-Schuykill.

Do something about the blockage in Porcupine Woods.

Could we have a "non manmade" bench or perch for bird watchers?

You could add 25 feet of playground space if you moved the asphalt path in Cambria.

Rope swing - restore it. Have something for older kids.

Author/Coordinator: Gerilee Bennett 11/9/2009
Reviewed 1/20/2010 and 5/6/2010 by IM Sullivan